

Statement Announcing the White House Conference on Child Care

July 23, 1997

Today the First Lady and I are pleased to announce that on October 23, 1997, we will host the White House Conference on Child Care. The conference, which will take place at the White House, will examine the strengths and weaknesses of child care in America and explore how our Nation can better respond to the needs of working families for affordable, high quality child care.

Over the past decade, the number of American families with working parents has expanded dramatically. Making high quality child care more affordable and accessible is critical to the strength of our families and to healthy child development and learning. It is also good for the economy and central to a productive American work force.

This Nation can and should do better. Each of us—from businesses to religious leaders to policymakers and elected officials—has a responsibility and an important stake in making sure that children of all ages have the best possible care available to them. From infancy through adolescence, in child care settings and afterschool programs, children can learn and thrive with the right care, attention, and education.

I hope that this conference will be the beginning of a national dialog about how best to care for all of America's children and will make a valuable contribution to our effort to improve child care in this country.

Statement on European Union Approval of the Boeing-McDonnell Douglas Merger

July 23, 1997

I am pleased that Boeing and the EU have resolved their differences and that the EU has agreed in principle to approve Boeing's merger with McDonnell Douglas. The Boeing-McDonnell Douglas merger will promote consolidation and efficiency in the U.S. defense industry and preserve the jobs of 14,000 workers at Douglas Aircraft Co. Our own independent Federal Trade Commission determined that the merger would not

harm competition. We hope that the EU will give the merger final approval expeditiously.

Remarks During a Discussion on Climate Change

July 24, 1997

The President. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, first let me thank you for being here—members of the administration and concerned members of the public, the scientists, and other experts that are here.

I would also like to say a special word of thanks to the Vice President. In one of our earliest meetings together—we meet once a week and have lunch—he went over the whole history of greenhouse gas emissions and climatic change. And I became convinced first that he was convinced that something was wrong. [*Laughter*] Then I became convinced something was wrong. And it's been a great help to me and I believe to the people of the United States to have him in the position that he's in not only with the convictions that he has, but with the knowledge that he has. And I'm very grateful to him for what he has done to help me come to grips with this issue.

To me, we have to see this whole issue of climate change in terms of our deepest obligations to future generations. I have spent most of my time in the last 4½ years trying to prepare the American people for a new century and a new millennium. It is also very important that we protect the Earth for that new millennium, to make sure that people will be able to take advantage of all the things we are trying to do, the opportunities we are trying to create, the problems we are trying to solve.

It is obvious that we cannot fulfill our responsibilities to future generations unless we deal responsibly with the challenge of climate change. Whenever the security of our country has been threatened, we have led the world to a better resolution. That is what is at stake here. And the scientists have come here to explain why.

As the Vice President said, the overwhelming balance of evidence and scientific opinion is that it is no longer a theory but now a fact that global warming is for real. The world

scientists believe that if we don't cut our emissions of greenhouse gases, we will disrupt the global climate. In fact, there is ample evidence that human activities are already disrupting the global climate and that if we stay on our current course, the average global temperatures may rise 2 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit during the next century. To put that in some context, the difference in average temperature between the last ice age, which was 10,000 to 12,000 years ago—10,000 to 12,000 years ago—and today, is about 9 degrees Fahrenheit. So we could have two-thirds of that change in 100 years unless we do something.

If we fail to act, scientists expect that our seas will rise 1 to 3 feet, and thousands of square miles here in the United States, in Florida, Louisiana, and other coastal areas will be flooded. Infectious diseases will spread to new regions. Severe heat waves will claim lives. Agriculture will suffer. Severe droughts and floods will be more common. These are the things that are reasonably predictable.

In the face of this, the United States must confront a challenge that in some ways is the most difficult of all democracy's challenges to face. That is, we have evidence, we see the train coming, but most ordinary Americans in their day-to-day lives can't hear the whistle blowing. Unless they have lived in a place where they have experienced severe and unusual and completely atypical weather disruptions in the last 5 years or so, the degree of the challenge is inconsistent with the actual perceived experience of most ordinary Americans. And this is true, indeed, throughout the world. And that presents us our challenge.

A democracy is premised on the proposition that if the American people, or any people in any democracy, know what the facts are and believe them, way more than half the time they will do the right thing. And so what we are doing today is beginning a process in which we ask the American people to listen to the evidence, to measure it against their own experience, but not to discount the weight of scientific authority if their own experience does not yet confirm what the overwhelming percentage of sci-

entists believe to be fact today. This is a great exercise and a great test for our democracy.

I do want to say that I am convinced that when the nations of the world meet in Kyoto, Japan, in December on this issue, the United States has got to be committed to realistic and binding limits on our emissions of greenhouse gases. Between now and then, we have to work with the American people to get them to share that commitment. We have to emphasize flexible market-based approaches. We have to embrace research and development efforts in technology that will help us to improve the economy—improve the environment while permitting our economy to grow. We have to ask all nations, both industrial and developing, to participate in this process.

But if we do this together, we can defuse this threat. And we can make the 21st century what it ought to be, not only for our children but for all the children of the world. I believe the science demands that we face this challenge now. I'm positive that we owe it to our children. And I hope that we can find the wisdom and the skill to do democracy's work in the next few months, to build the consensus necessary to actually make action, as opposed to rhetoric, possible. And for all of you for your commitment to that, I thank you.

And now I'd like to ask Dr. Rowland to be the first of our distinguished scientists to lead off.

Doctor.

[At this point, the discussion proceeded.]

The President. Let me, again, thank you all for your patience and your interest. I think we should give our panelists and scientists another hand. [Applause] I wish every American could hear what we've heard today. But thanks to our friends in the media, a good number of them will hear at least a portion of what we have heard today. And this is the beginning of a consistent long-term effort that we all have to make to involve the people of this country in this decision. And I thank you all for the points you've made because in different ways each of them will resonate with citizens of this country in a way that I believe will give us the support we need to take the action that has to be taken.

In the weeks and months ahead, the Vice President, the Cabinet, other members of the administration, and I will be out in the country discussing this. We'll be working with the American people. We'll be talking about solutions as well as problems. The truth is, it's like anything else—the quicker you get—another answer Dr. Holdren might have given is that the quicker you get after this the less extreme the remedy you have to embrace to have a measurable effect to avoid an undesirable outcome. And the longer you wait, the more disruptive the ultimate resolution will be. So that's another thing that I'd like to emphasize.

Before we close I hope you will permit me to make a brief statement. Just before I came in here to this meeting I learned that today, and not very long ago, retired Supreme Court Justice William Brennan passed away. He was a remarkable human being, one of the finest and most influential jurists in our Nation's history. He served on the Supreme Court for 34 years. He was perhaps during that period the staunchest, most effective defender of individual freedom against Government intrusion. His devotion to the Bill of Rights inspired millions of Americans and countless young law students, including myself. And one of the great honors I have had as President was to be able to award him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in my first year in office.

He once said the role of the Constitution is the protection of the dignity of every human being and the recognition that every individual has fundamental rights which Government cannot deny. He spent a lifetime upholding those rights, and he authored some of the most enduring constitutional decisions of this century, including *Baker v. Carr* on one person, one vote; *The New York Times v. Sullivan*, which brought the free speech doctrine into the latter half of the 20th century. The force of his ideas, the strength of his leadership, and his character have safeguarded freedom and widened the circle of quality for every single one of us.

We will miss him greatly. And I know you join me in sending our best wishes and our prayers to his family and friends, and our gratitude for his life.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to discussion participants F. Sherwood Rowland, professor, University of California at Irvine, and John Holdren, professor, Harvard University.

Proclamation 7013—Death of William J. Brennan, Jr.

July 24, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As a mark of respect for the memory of William J. Brennan, Jr., former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, I hereby order, by the authority vested in me as President of the United States of America by section 175 of title 36 of the United States Code, that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until sunset on the day of interment. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same period at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on July 29.